

**MINUTES
TOWN OF DARIEN
BOARD OF SELECTMEN
SPECIAL MEETING**

March 31, 2010

First Selectman David Campbell called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m. In attendance were Selectmen Bayne, Nielsen, Stevenson and Sullivan. Also in attendance were Police Chief Duane Lovello, Emergency Management Director Marc McEwan, Public Works Director Robert Steeger, Fire Commissioner Jim O'Brien, and Administrative Officer Karl Kilduff.

First Selectman Campbell noted that the purpose of the meeting was to review after action reports from the storm of March 13 and 14.

Police Chief Lovello distributed a written report on the storm and read into the record its Executive Summary (attached). In his report, Chief Lovello noted that he did not think opening the Emergency Operations Center would have expedited the storm response; that the communications center is too small and lacks the equipment to respond to a high volume of calls as was seen in the storm; the primary radio transmitters for EMS and Fire went down and the lack of a back-up should be unacceptable and addressed by a request for funding; that specific call groups should be established within the Code Red system to keep officials up-to-date; that the public needed to be better educated on how to use and subscribe to the Code Red and Nixle systems; the number of vehicles available were limited; and that the Town should increase its supply of readily available barricades.

Mr. Bayne questioned the type of event that would have benefitted from opening the Emergency Operations Center. Chief Lovello emphasized events which would require a multi-faceted approach and triage. He suggested that an event like a hurricane would be a good example as coordination would become key.

Ms. Sullivan asked if this storm was the first time the radio system went down. Chief Lovello stated that there had been failures in the past. Mr. Kilduff added that the Board of Selectmen would receive a transfer request for the proposed solution at its next meeting.

Mr. Bayne asked if there were other special groups in Town that could benefit from a special Code Red group, like those with special needs who may not be on a Social Services Department list. Chief Lovello stated that the computer aided dispatch system could record special needs, but experience has shown that these groups are reluctant to identify themselves. The Board had a general discussion on community outreach. The discussion ended with Chief Lovello noting that the Town could educate people better to use the systems in place and collect alternate and cell phone numbers.

Emergency Management Director Marc McEwan was recognized for a report. Mr. McEwan stated that communication was beneficial during the storm with Code Red and Nixle and echoed the comments of Chief Lovello that better public education needs to be done. He emphasized that everyone should review the Emergency Operations Plan. This document is

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updated annually and everyone should understand their own role and the role of others in a disaster. He added that the Fire Departments do make an effort to have special needs people self-identify if they have issues.

Mr. Bayne asked if the information collected by the Fire Departments is kept in a central database. Mr. McEwan responded by stating that the goal is to have that data entered into the computer aided dispatch system.

Ms. Stevenson stated that she learned from Norm Guimond of the Red Cross that shelters are not ready to provide medical assistance unless it is provided by the resident. Mr. McEwan offered that conditions may prevent sending someone to a hospital for sheltering with treatment and there may be a need to provide some level of assistance.

Mr. McEwan shared a concern about some of the public information that was put into circulation. The wrong message was delivered to the public about reporting FEMA-eligible damage. He added that a better response needs to be developed.

The Board and Mr. McEwan discussed approaches to emergency management training and exercises. Chief Lovello added to the conversation that the Town needed to get its arms around the current issues identified in this process and put solutions in place before testing a hypothetical response. He added that the resources needed from this event would be used in other situations.

Mr. Bayne questioned Mr. McEwan on the benefits of declaring a local state of emergency. Mr. McEwan stated that declaring a local emergency is usually tied to local ordinances that grant special authorities to spend money or to purchase materials. He added that it has nothing to do with getting funding from FEMA. It does heighten public awareness of the event however. A declaration by the Governor is important in securing FEMA funding. Mr. McEwan added that he thought it was the right decision not to declare a local emergency.

Mr. Bayne asked about a policy regarding opening shelters and the criteria that would be used. Mr. McEwan stated that one consideration needs to be the public's ability to reach the shelter. He also noted that resources to open and staff a shelter need to be in place. Ms. Sullivan asked if a list of questions could be developed to decide to open a shelter or not. Chief Lovello suggested some deference to capable people in responsible position and not an automatic check list. He emphasized that common sense and good judgment need to be exercised.

Public Works Director Robert Steeger was asked for his report. He started by stating that Public Works is not a first responder in the same sense as the Police or Fire Departments. The focus for the department was clearing trees out of the road and cleaning up the mess afterwards. He noted that the enormity of the storm did not become clear until Sunday and it was attacked until completed.

Mr. Bayne stated that Kim Westcott allowed the use of Board of Education crews to support the Public Works Department, but they were not used. Mr. Steeger responded that the department needed specialized equipment like chippers and loaders which was filled by hiring contractors.

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Mr. Bayne also asked about the dedicated line crews given to the Town. Mr. Steeger stated that is started with one crew but grew to a high of 4 crews that would follow local priorities for opening roads.

Fire Commissioner Jim O'Brien was recognized for a report. He stated that the Fire Departments were on duty. The biggest challenge was getting to the scene. He added that the back-up radio dispatch system was put into place. He echoed the comments made earlier about the need for communication and added that the departments received a number of calls for assistance directly.

Ms. Stevenson stated that despite the inability to get big equipment into help people, the departments were still able to respond. Mr. O'Brien stated that people walked into situations to assess and evaluate the condition.

Mr. Bayne raised a few general issues. First, he noted that he heard of some frustration about the day-to-day decision to close school. It was his impression that people would have left town if citizens knew that the schools would be closed for a multi-day period. Second, he raised a protocol issue within the Board of Selectman. Specifically, he suggested that there should be a formal handoff to the acting first selectman.

Ms. Stevenson wished to note others that deserved thanks. Specifically, she highlighted Linda O'Leary, Marge Dwyer, Alyssa Lopiano, Joanne Iacono and Karen Santorella for their efforts in dealing with the calls from the public. Sue Swiatek, Jim Coghlan, and Alica Sillars were noted for their efforts to quickly put together a recreation program for kids.

Mr. Bayne offered that the public should be more aware of tree management and that there should be some level of public education into tree management as a tool to keep trees health and avoid some of the damage that happened in the storm.

Selectman Bayne moved, seconded by Selectman Nielsen, to adjourn the meeting at 8:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted

Karl F. Kilduff
Administrative Officer